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TEMPORARY DUTY TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED BY TRAVELERS

U.S. Department
of Commerce
Office of Finance and
Federal Assistance

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TRAVELERS COVERED AND EXCLUDED

- **Travelers Covered:** Civilian employees as well as experts and consultants (including private individuals on invitation orders and individuals serving without pay or at $1.00 per year).
- **Travelers Excluded:** Commissioned Officers (governed by Joint Travel Regulations of the Uniformed Services) and Foreign Commercial Officers (governed by Foreign Service Travel Regulations of the Department of State).

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this booklet is to answer common questions regarding official travel at Government expense. The regulations concerning travel become increasingly complex as the details of each trip become more complex. Consequently, we have limited the coverage in this booklet to relatively simple travel situations. You should consult with your bureau's travel contact when you anticipate complex trips or unusual expenses BEFORE THE TRIP BEGINS. Also, consult the *Department of Commerce (DOC) Travel Handbook*, as supplemented by your bureau, for specific regulations, and consult the Administrative Payments Manual for detailed travel forms instructions. Requests for copies of these documents should also be directed to your bureau's travel contact.

GENERAL POLICY

It is the policy of the Department to reimburse travelers, within limits prescribed by laws and Government-wide regulations, for expenses necessarily incurred in carrying out the official business of the Department.

An employee traveling on official business is expected to exercise the same care and reasonableness in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business. Expenses which exceed the

maximum expense rate authorized by regulations will not be reimbursed. Supervisors have the authority and the responsibility to reduce claims that seem unreasonable even if the claim is lower than the maximum rate.

COVERAGE

- This booklet basically covers temporary duty travel in the 48 contiguous States and the District of Columbia only. Travel to Alaska, Hawaii, U.S. possessions and foreign countries involves additional instructions and should be discussed with your bureau travel contact.

- We have excluded any mention of specific rates payable for such items as per diem and mileage since they change frequently. The current rates are published in the *DOC Travel Handbook* and in the General Services Administration's (GSA's) *Federal Travel Directory*.

- The *DOC Travel Handbook* also covers travel regulations related to areas outside the 48 contiguous States and incorporates regulations issued by the General Services Administration, the Department of State, and the Department of Defense.

- Foreign travel requires extensive preparation and clearances. Please review your bureau's instructions on the time needed for advance arrangements.

- Selected material covering travel of new or prospective employees is covered in the latter pages of this booklet.

A GLOSSARY OF COMMON TRAVEL TERMS

Actual subsistence—A method of reimbursing travelers for their actual costs when actual expenses are unusually high due to special or unusual circumstances. Subsistence generally includes items such as lodging, meals, and laundry costs. It excludes costs incidental to transportation (e.g., taxi and related tips).

Baggage—Government property and your personal property necessary for the purpose of official travel.

Bureau—In this booklet the term bureau is used to denote an organizational unit of the Department of Commerce.

Bureau charge card contact—Person designated by bureau management to administer the contractor-issued Government charge card program, including the processing of applications for the card and answering employee questions.

Bureau travel contact—Person designated by bureau management to distribute travel policy and to assist employees with travel-related questions.

Common (commercial) carrier—Any firm furnishing commercial transportation. This includes airplane, railroad, bus, and ship.

Mileage allowance—A fixed rate per mile allowed (instead of actual expenses) for operation of a privately-owned conveyance.

Per Diem—A method of reimbursing travelers for living expenses. Under this formula method, actual costs may be more or less than the per diem allowance. Essentially, per diem includes a fixed daily amount for meals and other expenses plus actual lodging costs (not to exceed a stated amount).

Privately-owned conveyance—A privately-owned automobile, aircraft, or motorcycle used by you other than on a for hire or rental basis. A privately-owned vehicle could belong to you or a friend.

Special conveyance—Commercially rented transportation of any type (e.g., autos, planes, boats, etc.). Special conveyances shall be used only when it is NOT advantageous to the Government to use (a) common carriers, (b) Government-leased vehicles, or (c) privately-owned conveyances.

Temporary duty—Authorized temporary absence from your official duty station to which you will return upon completing an assignment.

AUTHORITY TO TRAVEL

- **What is my authority to travel?**

A Form CD-29, Travel Order, must be issued and approved by your bureau for all travel outside of the metropolitan area where you are stationed. The level of management approval depends on your position and the circumstances and purpose of the trip. Travel authorized on a CD-29 identifies both special restrictions that may be placed on you and special allowances (such as for a rental car).

- **What if I could not get a written authorization before the trip began?**

This should be an unusual situation. When it does occur, a confirmatory travel order must be prepared as soon as possible after travel.

- **What about local travel?**

Written travel orders are not required when travel is performed wholly within one day, does not involve per diem or overnight lodging, and is to points within a 50-mile radius of the official duty station. However, verbal approval by your bureau management is necessary, as well as approval on any reimbursement vouchers.

- **What types of travel need special approval?**

—Travel outside of the 48 contiguous States and the District of Columbia.

—Travel involving special per diem and subsistence rates.

—Use of extra-fare air accommodations (including first class and business class). Approval by the Assistant Secretary for Administration is required on a Form CD-334, Request for Approval of Extra Fare Air Accommodations.

—Use of a non-contract carrier for air travel between two cities when a Government contract with a carrier for air travel between those two cities exists.

—Certain conferences or travel to resort areas.

The travel outlined above may involve special rates, approval, or documentation. We recommend that you consult administrative or fiscal personnel in your bureau before the travel order is issued.

- **Can I travel at my own expense on official duty?**

Yes, but a travel order must be issued which explicitly states the terms. The order is particularly important to protect your benefits in case of injury or death.

TRAVEL FUNDING

- **Am I expected to use my own funds to pay for travel expenses?**

No. The Government offers you two methods to minimize the need for you to use your own funds: (1) the contractor-issued Government charge card, and (2) travel advances, in the form of cash and/or travelers checks, for those expenses that cannot be charged.

- **How do I obtain a contractor-issued Government charge card and how does the charge card work?**

Any employee who travels for the Department on official business may apply for the card. If you expect to make two or more trips per year, you are considered a frequent traveler and should apply for the card. See your bureau charge card contact to apply. You will receive the card in the mail within two weeks after applying.

The card is to be used for official travel expenses only. It should be used for your common carrier transportation, lodging, rental cars and other expenses, such as meals, where possible. You will receive a monthly statement for your charges that must be paid in full by the due date. By filing a travel voucher promptly after

the completion of your travel, you will receive reimbursement for your travel expenses in ample time to pay the balance on your statement. See your bureau contact for additional information.

- **How can I obtain an advance of funds for travel expenses that cannot be charged?**

Use Form CD-369, Travel Advance, to obtain a travel advance. Travel advances of $50 or more can be obtained from your nearest imprest fund, if the fund is maintained for such a purpose. Advances of less than $50 are discouraged. If you have a charge card or if you are a frequent traveler and the charge card has been made available to you, your request for an advance should not exceed $26 per travel day without justification. If you are not a frequent traveler and you do not have a charge card, your request for an advance should not exceed 80% of anticipated out-of-pocket expenses. Travel advances will be given in the form of travelers checks, where available, unless the advance is under $100.

If your imprest fund does not carry travelers checks and your advance is for more than $500, you should forward your advance request to your travel payment office for payment by Treasury check. For the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, the travel payment office is the Management Service Center (MSC) in Germantown, Maryland. For all other locations, the paying office is the Administrative Support Center (ASC) servicing your geographic area and bureau. To receive an advance by Treasury check, you should apply for the advance at least two weeks prior to the start of your trip. Limit your request for funds to the amount you will need within the next 45 calendar days.

- **How am I reimbursed for my travel expenses?**

Use Form CD-370, Travel Voucher. This form is a statement of the expenses you incurred

while on official travel. Each travel voucher should include a copy of your travel order, certain receipts, and the signature of your approving official. Your voucher should be forwarded to your travel payment office. Administrative personnel in your bureau are available to help you prepare the voucher.

- **When should I submit my travel voucher?**

You should submit a voucher within five days of returning from each trip, or once per month if you are continually traveling. Be aware that, if you are using personal funds, you are only short-changing yourself by not submitting your travel voucher promptly.

- **How do I account for and repay an advance?**

File a travel voucher stating your expenses. Indicate your outstanding advance balance and show the expenses as being applied to your advance. For any portion of an advance that is not applied, include a check or money order with the voucher. Credit cards may be accepted in the future for the repayment of travel advances. See your travel contact to check the availability of credit cards for this purpose.

If your trip is cancelled, send a check for the amount of your advance with a copy of your travel order to your payment center. Consult the Administrative Payments Manual or bureau instructions for more information.

- **Do I have to repay the unused advance at the end of the trip?**

You should repay any amount which you do not foresee using within the next 30 days. Advances should not be held for travel expected to begin after the next 30 days.

- **How do I keep a portion of my outstanding advance?**

You may keep that portion of your advance that you expect to need for travel in the com-

ing month. File a travel voucher stating your expenses and your travel advance amount outstanding. Apply your expenses to the amount of the advance that you will NOT need in the coming month. Request a check for the difference if your expenses are greater than the unneeded portion of the advance; send a check for the difference if the unneeded portion of the advance is greater than your expenses.

- **What happens if I don't submit a travel voucher?**

If you have an advance, your bureau monitors its use through the Department's travel system. When no vouchers have been filed within a reasonable period, your bureau will demand repayment. If necessary, outstanding advances will be deducted from your salary. If it becomes necessary to deduct money from your salary, you may be charged a $15 administrative fee.

REIMBURSEMENT FOR LOCAL TRAVEL

- **How can I obtain reimbursement for local travel?**

Local travel may be reimbursed on an SF-1164, Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business, if your location maintains an imprest fund. The imprest fund cashier will give you an immediate cash reimbursement for your expenses. If you work at a location which does not maintain an imprest fund, use a travel voucher for reimbursement.

PER DIEM AND SUBSISTENCE

- **How am I reimbursed for subsistence expenses?**

You are entitled to a per diem allowance for subsistence expenses incurred while traveling on official business. The per diem allowance is a daily payment for lodging, meals, and related incidental expenses.

- **What expenses are covered by the per diem allowance?**

The per diem allowance covers all charges, including taxes and service charges, for lodging, meals, laundry and cleaning and pressing of clothes, and tips to waiters and waitresses, porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, and hotel maids. Telephone expenses are not a subsistence expense. Official calls should be claimed separately as a miscellaneous expense. If a flat fee for telephones (not specially ordered) is added to the lodging bill, regardless of use, consider this a lodging cost.

You will not be reimbursed for subsistence expenses when they are incurred at your official duty station or residence.

- **Is the cost of transportation to place of meals allowed?**

Generally not. The cost of transportation is only allowed where the nature and location of the work at the temporary duty station are such that suitable meals cannot be obtained. For example, you should not claim reimbursement for taxis to restaurants when suitable dining facilities are within walking distance of the work site or place of lodging.

- **How is per diem computed?**

Per diem is computed under the General Services Administration's (GSA's) lodgings-plus system. Under this system, the actual cost of lodging is allowed, up to a maximum for the location. Receipts for lodging are required. In addition, one of two fixed daily allowances, depending on location, is given for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE). M&IE for the first and last days of travel will be reimbursed for the portion of the day you are in a travel status. The maximum lodging amounts and the allowances for M&IE can be found in the *Federal Travel Directory* or the *DOC Travel Handbook*, and may not be increased by your bureau. In special situations, your bureau may authorize a lower per diem rate.

- **How am I reimbursed for partial days when traveling more than 24 hours?**

On the first and last days of travel, the per diem allowable is one-fourth of the M&IE rate for each quarter day or portion of a "quarter day" you are away from your residence or office. Each quarter is 6 hours. The first quarter starts at 12 midnight and ends at 6 a.m., the next quarter runs from 6 a.m. to 12 noon, then 12 noon to 6 p.m., and 6 p.m. to 12 midnight. Your travel status begins when you depart from your residence or duty station and ends when you return to your residence or duty station. Consequently, it is important that you NOTE DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL TIMES.

- **Do I have to go to the office before starting a trip?**

No. All departures and arrivals from any point depend upon the carrier's schedule. If it is reasonable and agreeable to your bureau, you may depart from your residence. Similarly, you may go from the terminal to your home at the end of a trip depending on the carrier's arrival time and your bureau's regulations. You should not arrange departures or arrivals to gain additional per diem allowance.

- **May I be paid a per diem allowance at or near my official duty station?**

No. Per diem is not paid for travel performed at the official duty station or within a 50-mile radius of either your official duty station or your residence. However, under unusual circumstances, your authorizing official may authorize per diem within the 50-mile radius of your official duty station on a case-by-case basis, based upon commuting time or distance, the location of your residence and official duty station, and the nature of your temporary duty as it relates to the commute.

- **May I receive per diem if my trip is less than 24 hours and does not require lodging?**

Yes. However, per diem is not allowed for travel of 10 hours or less. When the travel period is

more than 10 hours but less than 24 hours and does not require lodging, one-fourth of the M&IE rate applicable to the location of the temporary duty assignment will be allowed for each "quarter day", or portion of a "quarter day." However, in this situation the first "quarter day," or six-hour period, starts with the beginning of travel, and not at 12 midnight, 6 a.m., 12 noon, or 6 p.m.

- **May I claim payments to friends or relatives for lodging if I stay with them?**

Generally, no. Friends or relatives (except commercial innkeepers) may receive reimbursement only if it can be demonstrated that they incurred additional costs because of your stay CLEARLY EQUAL to the amount of reimbursement claimed. The burden of proof is on you. It is difficult to demonstrate or justify such additional costs.

When you incur no lodging costs, you are only entitled to claim the M&IE rate. You may claim, IN ADDITION TO PER DIEM, reasonable transportation costs incurred in obtaining free or low-cost lodging.

- **What if subsistence expenses are unusually high?**

In limited situations, your bureau can approve the payment of ACTUAL subsistence expenses if it is foreseen that subsistence expenses will be substantially above the per diem amount established for a location. Travel on the actual subsistence basis must be authorized in advance on a travel order. You will be required, in this case, to itemize ALL subsistence expenses, including each meal, on your travel voucher, and should, therefore, keep detailed records of expenses.

- **Is there a maximum actual subsistence rate?**

Your bureau manager may set a subsistence rate higher than the applicable per diem rate prescribed for the location of travel for each

trip depending on the circumstances. Under GSA's Federal Travel Regulations, the maximum daily rate allowable for actual subsistence expenses is 150 percent of the applicable maximum per diem rate prescribed for the location of the travel. Reimbursement for meals and incidental expenses shall not, under any circumstances, exceed 150 percent of the M&IE rate established for the temporary duty location.

- **Can I be on both per diem and actual subsistence in the same trip?**

Yes. When you travel to two or more locations in one trip, and you have been authorized actual subsistence for at least one of the locations, part of the trip may be on per diem and part may be on actual subsistence. However, only one method of reimbursement may be used within a calendar day.

- **What receipts must I submit with my travel voucher?**

Receipts for lodging costs MUST BE SUBMITTED for both per diem and actual subsistence travel. Generally, receipts are also required for any other expense over $25. However, receipts for meals and incidental expenses are not required if you are traveling on a per diem basis. Your supervisor may disallow inordinately expensive claims. It is good practice to obtain receipts for all expenses for your personal records and to substantiate your claim if questioned.

- **May I take my spouse or family with me at Government expense?**

For temporary duty travel, any additional cost for your spouse or family must be paid by you. You may claim no more than the single occupancy room rate which would have been applicable if you had traveled without your spouse or family. For example, if you and your spouse stay in a room with a $60 double occupancy rate and a $50 single occupancy rate, you may only claim $50 as the lodging cost.

TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES

- **What transportation expenses are allowed?**

All reasonable transportation expenses in connection with official travel are allowed IN ADDITION TO per diem/subsistence expenses. However, the transportation obtained must be the most economical available. Traveler convenience does not justify using higher cost transportation.

- **Is there any specific route or type of transportation I must use for travel?**

You must use the most direct or usually traveled route. Any additional transportation cost for indirect travel for personal reasons is at your expense. Trains, buses, and, when specifically approved, rental cars and taxis may be used for short distance travel. Airline travel should normally be used for long distances since it usually results in the lowest overall cost. When a Government contract for air travel between two cities exists, you should normally use the contract carrier.

- **How should I pay for long distance transportation?**

A contractor-issued Government charge card is the preferred method for payment of long distance transportation. Otherwise, if the round-trip cost of airline, train, or bus transportation will exceed $100, you MUST use an SF-1169, Government Transportation Request (GTR). Your bureau will furnish the GTR upon request. You must submit the GTR to the carrier as payment for transportation services. In many of the larger Department sites, a Federal Travel Management Center (FTMC), such as SATO in the Main Commerce Building in Washington, D.C., may have made arrangements to bill the Department directly. In such a case, a copy of your travel order is all that will be necessary to obtain transportation at these locations. Your passenger coupon (ticket receipt) must be attached to your travel voucher, regardless of how it was purchased.

DO NOT use your personal credit card, check, or cash to purchase your transportation. You may not be reimbursed for the cost of transportation if you do so, unless it is an emergency situation. Whenever possible, approval of the use of cash should be obtained prior to travel.

- **Where should I order airline tickets?**

Airline tickets should be procured through an FTMC whenever possible. Otherwise, airline tickets should be purchased directly from the carrier. You should avoid using non-FTMC travel agents, i.e., tr vel agents not under contract with GSA. Using a non-FTMC travel agent requires an administrative determination that common carrier arrangements through the non-FTMC travel agent are cost advantageous and will not interfere with the conduct of official business.

- **What class accommodations may I use?**

Generally, extra fare accommodations may NOT be used. Such accommodations may be used only if one f the following conditions exists:

—Coach accommodations are not available in time to accomplish travel that is so urgent that it cannot be postponed.

—The traveler is so handicapped that other accommodations cannot be used, and a doctor's certificate attests to the handicap.

—First-class or business-class accommodations are required for security purposes or because special circumstances exist that make their use essential to the successful performance of the Department's mission.

—Lesser accommodations on foreign carriers do not provide adequate health or sanitation standards.

—The use of first-class or business-class accommodations will result in an overall cost savings to the Government based on economic considerations.

Where advantageous to the Government, business-class, but not first-class, air accommodations MAY be allowed in lieu of an authorized rest stop on foreign travel. In all of the above cases, a written justification must accompany the travel order on a CD-334, Request for Approval of Extra Fare Air Accommodations, approved by the Assistant Secretary for Administration. See bureau instructions for any other special procedures to be followed in obtaining approval of extra-fare air travel.

- **Will the Government pay for my baggage transportation costs?**

Baggage up to certain weight and size limits is usually transported without charge by the common carrier. Excess baggage charges are reimbursable to you only when authorized by your bureau (e.g., carrying training materials to a meeting, extra clothing and personal items needed for extended temporary duty). You should attach any receipts for approved excess baggage charges to your voucher.

- **Where do I send unused tickets for cancelled reservations?**

Unused tickets purchased with your contractor-issued Government charge card should be returned to the FTMC or airline where they were purchased for credit to your account. Unused tickets purchased on a GTR should be attached to the front of the travel voucher for processing. If the trip is cancelled and no travel voucher is to be submitted, return the tickets to the MSC or your Administrative Support Center with a covering memo. Remember to cancel reservations as soon as you know they will not be used. Be aware that some carriers may assess a cancellation charge if the cancellation is not received within specific time limits set by the carriers.

- **What should I do if I didn't get to the terminal on time?**

Contact the carrier's agent and find out whether your ticket can be used or exchanged for trans-

portation at a later time. If not, use your contractor-issued Government charge card to purchase a new ticket (returning the original for a credit), or pay cash for your ticket. Remember, if you pay cash, post-trip approval is necessary.

- **What should I do if I lose a GTR or my ticket?**

If you lose a GTR, notify representatives of the common carriers at the location where the GTR was lost. Also, notify the organization which gave you the GTR.

If you lose a ticket, notify the carrier agent. Purchase a new ticket with a contractor-issued Government charge card, GTR, or cash. You must explain on your travel voucher why a new GTR was issued or a cash purchase was made. Be aware that you may be held liable for ticket-related costs incurred by the Government if you have been negligent in safeguarding a GTR or ticket.

- **May I keep penalty payments from airlines?**

Any penalty paid by an airline for failure to provide confirmed reserved space belongs to the Government. Send any payment received to the MSC or your Administrative Support Center with a covering memo.

- **What if I voluntarily give up my seat on an overbooked airplane?**

You may keep any compensation paid by the airline, subject to the following conditions:

—You may not claim additional travel costs, including per diem, that result from giving up your seat.

—If your travel is delayed during official duty hours, you must take annual leave.

—You must not voluntarily give up your seat if it will adversely affect performance of your official duties.

- **Can I use any air carrier I choose?**

Not in most cases. The Government has entered into contracts with certain carriers to provide discounted service between selected pairs of cities. Check the *Federal Travel Directory* to determine if the cities to which you are traveling have contract air service. Where such service is available, you must use it, unless you meet one of the exceptions stated in the *Federal Travel Directory*.

Your FTMC can assist you in making reservations. In general, you should make reservations as far in advance as possible, and ask about any special or discount fares.

- **What should I do with unused GTR's when I separate from Federal Service or transfer to another office?**

Return them immediately to your issuing office per bureau instructions and OBTAIN A RECEIPT. Failure to return them will delay your lump sum leave payment and retirement refund or benefits.

TAXIS AND RENTAL CARS

- **May I use a taxi and tip the driver?**

A taxi may be used when no other transportation is reasonably available or it is the least expensive means of transportation (including duty time lost with slower transportation). You may be reimbursed for tips not to exceed 15% of the fare. Receipts are needed for taxi fares, excluding tip, in excess of $25.

You should attempt to secure airport shuttle service or public transportation wherever possible. You should also consider limiting the taxi ride to or from the point where cheaper transportation is available. (For example, take an airport shuttle to the downtown area and a taxi to your destination.)

- **May I rent a car or other vehicle while on official travel?**

Yes, if approved by your bureau. Commercial rental agencies which participate in the agreement negotiated for the Government by the Department of Defense should be your first choice when renting a vehicle while on official business. This agreement includes a low daily rate and unlimited free mileage. See the *Federal Travel Directory* for information on rental agencies that participate in the agreement. Contact your FTMC to make rental arrangements.

Be cautious of "special" Government rates. The daily rate may appear to be low, but, in most cases, all the terms and benefits of the Government's agreement are not in effect.

- **What about purchasing insurance?**

You will not be reimbursed for these charges. If a vehicle is rented under the Government's agreement, full comprehensive and collision damage coverage is included at no charge. If you rent a vehicle outside the agreement, you may be reimbursed for damages providing they arose incident to your official business and were not the result of your negligence.

- **Who pays for vehicle rentals?**

You must pay for any vehicle rental, preferably with your contractor-issued Government charge card. You may then claim reimbursement on your travel voucher. Claims for rental vehicles must be supported by receipts.

USE OF PRIVATELY-OWNED VEHICLES

- **May I use my personal automobile for official travel?**

Yes, if approved by your bureau as advantageous to the Government. You will receive a

standard rate per mile for operating expenses with additional reimbursement for parking fees, ferry fees, and toll costs.

- **May I use my personal automobile for long distance travel in lieu of airplane, bus, or train?**

Yes. However, your mileage reimbursement, per diem, and other expenses will be limited to the costs you would have incurred if you had used a common carrier. Also, you must charge annual leave for any travel time (during work hours) in excess of normal travel time via common carrier. Any such annual leave must be approved by your bureau.

- **Do I get additional mileage allowance if another employee rides with me?**

For temporary duty travel, only a single flat mileage rate will be allowed, regardless of the number of persons in the auto.

- **May I drive my auto to a terminal and park it there while on travel?**

Yes. You will receive a mileage allowance plus reimbursement for parking fees. However, total reimbursement is limited to the round-trip cost of a taxi to the terminal plus tip.

- **What if someone drives me to a carrier terminal?**

When a spouse or friend drives you to or from a terminal, you may claim his or her round-trip mileage; however, the claim cannot exceed the cost of a one-way taxi fare.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

- **Can I accept non-Federal financing for my travel?**

Gifts and bequests made to the Department of Commerce may be accepted to pay, or reim-

burse, in whole or in part, the travel expenses of Department employees in approved official travel status. Under no circumstances may a traveler accept cash for official travel expenses. Any services in kind should be authorized on a travel order. Form CD-210, Record of Gift and Bequest, must be attached to your travel order.

- **At a meeting, may I accept free meals provided by the sponsor?**

If the sponsoring entity is a non-Federal organization, you may not accept meals, unless the entity has been authorized to provide them. Where the sponsoring entity is authorized to provide for these expenses or is a Federal agency, you may accept meals. However, a fixed amount must be deducted from your per diem claim for each meal accepted.

- **What do I do when a meal is included in a conference registration fee?**

If per diem is claimed, a fixed amount (which can be found in the *DOC Travel Handbook*) must be deducted for each meal. When traveling under the actual subsistence method, no claim may be made for the meal included in the registration fee.

- **Can my agency pay a prospective employee's travel expenses for an interview?**

This is a complex area which should be discussed with your administrative or fiscal officer BEFORE making a commitment. Under limited conditions these expenses may be allowed.

- **May I take leave while I'm in travel status?**

You may take annual leave if approved by your bureau. However, entitlement to per diem and other travel expenses will be discontinued for any day in which you are in leave status for

more than four hours. If sick leave is necessary due to illness or injury, entitlement to per diem and other travel expenses will continue for up to 14 calendar days. The travel voucher must indicate the exact time of departure from and return to duty status. Please check with your bureau to determine if any special handling of the voucher is needed. Travel involving annual leave should be indicated on your travel order.

- **May I keep coupons or certificates for free or reduced-cost travel arrangements?**

No. All certificates, coupons, and other promotional material received while traveling on official business are Government property and must be turned over to the Department according to your bureau's instructions.

TRAVEL TIPS

- **Discounts**

Many hotels and motels allow discounts for Federal travelers. You should inquire about discounts WHEN RESERVING AND AGAIN WHEN REGISTERING to take maximum advantage of these discounts and, in some cases, sales tax exemptions. DO NOT rely on oral reservation arrangements for these discounts. Many facilities honor only discounts arranged at the time of registration.

The *Federal Travel Directory* lists hotels and motels in the United States and overseas that offer discounts to Federal employees on official business. Check the Directory or with your bureau to see which hotels or motels offer discounts in the cities to which you are traveling.

- **Official Phone Calls**

Whenever possible, official phone calls should be placed using the Federal Telephone System (FTS).

When traveling domestically for more than one night on official business, you are authorized one phone call daily to your residence in the United States, preferably using FTS. If an FTS call is impractical, a commercial call may be made. Claims for these commercial calls cannot exceed $3.00 per day.

- **Itineraries**

You may find it prudent to leave a copy of your itinerary both at home and at your office. A complete itinerary would include the address and phone number of the office(s) to be visited as well as your hotel or motel.

- **Recording Expenses**

You might find it convenient to carry a copy of a travel voucher with you and record expenses, as they are incurred, directly on the voucher.